

PSO Newsletter



March 2002

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 13, Number 1

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK....

Which Resource First?

"Resource First" declares the motto of the Fish and Boat Commission. I buy that! But, what is the resource? I suspect that, in the case of this state agency, many people would say that "fish" is the key resource. After all, that's what people catch for recreation. This is especially true when it comes to the state fish, the brook trout. But, what resources do trout need?

Can we just back a truck full of trout to a stream and dump them out, expecting them to live? Amazingly, some people expect just that. The fish might live for a while but will not last without good trout habitat. Trout depend on the health of the stream.

Poor water quality? No fish. Lousy fishing. Fewer recreation dollars spent. Fewer licences sold. Water defines everything.

Watersheds are the basic unit of natural environments. They are the puzzle pieces that fit together for the big picture of the great outdoors. Unhealthy watersheds are bad for fish and for everything else, too. That is why everyone interested in fish or birds should be involved with watershed groups. The watersheds are the real resource that cannot fit neatly into delivery trucks. Without a commitment to protecting watersheds, all the fishing licences in the world are not going to buy good fishing.

So, what about birds? Do we just raise birds in pens and release them for birders to enjoy? Can you imagine the Game Commission or a tourist agency raising Louisiana Waterthrushes and Blackburnian Warblers to make sure everyone got the opportunity to enjoy these handsome species? Imagine the truck backing up to the woods along a stream and a flock of warblers flying out into the trees. Get

those birds for your county list before they get away! Even if this amazing feat were performed, the birds would not last long without good habitat. For birds and fish, the lesson is the same. The resource that matters most is the supporting habitat.

Watersheds are threatened by many things, some obvious and others obscure. With our state's industrial history, acid mine drainage and acid deposition are big factors. As we have learned at our meetings, Louisiana Waterthrushes are the "feathered trout" that serve as yardsticks for watershed health, especially where acid flows downstream. Poor stream health means few waterthrushes as well as trout. Poor insect populations spell disaster for any insectivorous bird. Acid precipitation has been the death knell for many mountainous watersheds turning clean trout streams into deadly clear creeks devoid of fish.

Surprisingly, more of our watersheds are harmed by agricultural runoff than by acid mine drainage. This is why stream-bank fencing helps a diversity of birds from Mallards and Hooded Mergansers to Yellow Warblers and Song Sparrows.

In our hemlock hollows and mountainsides, there lurks another threat to bird habitat. The invasion of our forests by the pest known as the hemlock woolly adelgid is slowly diminishing forest health across the state. This nefarious furry white pest may suck the life from our hemlock stands. The eastern hemlock is more than our state tree; it is a key component of small stream habitat. Providing shade, cover, and foraging surfaces for insect-gleaning birds, hemlocks are like needled umbrellas that shelter and cool small streams, providing unique habitats for birds. Some bird species are much more common in hemlock woods. These include, at the very least, the handsome Blackburnian Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Winter Wren. What would the world be like without the sun glancing off the fiery face of a

blackburnian? A lot less colorful. The Ruffed Grouse, our state bird, is better off where there are low-growing hemlocks. The hemlock umbrella also cools streams so they are more suitable for brook trout.

So, there are three state symbols, brook trout, eastern hemlock, and Ruffed Grouse, that are affected by watershed health. Protecting watersheds seems the natural thing to do in Pennsylvania. Watersheds are the critical pieces of the environmental puzzle. For a complete natural picture, we need to keep all the pieces. For that, we need a deep commitment and involvement in watershed protection that goes beyond symbols and mottos.

Think big. Be bold.

– Douglas A. Gross, President

***Pennsylvania Birds* Transition**

It must have been like the turning over the keys for a daughter's first solo drive. There's a sense of relief, anxiety, hope, and satisfaction. Whatever the experience, passing the baton as founder, publisher, editor, etc. of the journal *Pennsylvania Birds* was a big step for Frank and Barb Haas. The one-year anniversary of that transition has almost arrived, and the umbilical cord is not fully severed – Frank and Barb continue to assist with the publication. This transition has much to do with the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology – because we as a society are now in the driver's seat; it's our journal!

Everyone participating in this venture knew we were involved in a big project, but none of us really knew the extent of the task needed to keep the publication going. From entering the quarterly tables county by county to drafting an insightful "Summary of the Season" and soliciting interesting articles, the job is massive. Publication of *Pennsylvania Birds* starts with birders...you... providing the raw material. From there, county compilers produce a table with dates and numbers for each species and write a brief county summary. This information is then entered by Wendy Jo Shemansky, our data entry technician. Wendy Jo sends a compiled table of all counties' data and all the comments, as well as rare bird documentation, to a quarterly editor (Doug Kibbe, Mike Fialkovich, Dan Brauning, or Peter Robinson). That editor reviews records and writes the "Summary of the Season" and "Birds of Note" columns. Those items are sent to our editor-in-chief Katrina Knight, who checks everything, writes editorials, edits articles, compiles photos for the cover and Photo Highlights, and then publishes the magazine! Behind the scene are membership issues, recruitment, administrative duties, etc. Wow!

The Transition Team decided to keep the magazine the way it has been for the first year. Lots of ideas are floating around concerning improvements or simply massive changes; but, we felt from the start that the most likely way to succeed in producing this valuable reference was to not change a thing! That's our commitment for the first year. We will, however, be open to changes starting with next year's issue. Major changes are likely to occur, particularly with the county tables. The Team, which is overseen by the PSO Board, includes all those listed above, as well as Rudy Keller, Keith Bildstein, Frank and Barb Haas, and Deuane Hoffman.

All said, the process has not run as smoothly as we had initially hoped. Yes, you waited an extra five months for the 1st issue of the 14th volume. The 2nd issue should be in your hands by now. The learning curve has been steep, and we've made some mistakes along the way. But, we continue to be committed to publishing as good a journal as was produced under the Haases' guidance those 13 years, including bringing the publication back into schedule! One aberration planned is to combine the 3rd and 4th quarters into one (1) issue during this spring in order to catch up production of the magazine. That issue – a monster – will contain all the features you'd expect from those quarters: fall hawk migration report, CBC summary, tables and county comments for both quarters. Nothing will be lost – except the time necessary to produce two issues. This issue should be out before the May 2002 annual meeting. From that time on, we are committed to publishing quarterly issues as usual, except a month later than previously with delivery of the magazine in July, October, January, and April. We just need the extra time to pass the information from one person to the next.

Pennsylvania Birds is alive and well (actually recovering from a mid-life adjustment – but coming along well). Your patience during the delayed issues has been much appreciated. Continued support of the journal is equally valued. We need your continued support with bird records, subscriptions, documentation of rare birds, all of the pieces of this grand puzzle which have powerfully linked together the birders of the state. Stick with us. Provide ideas on ways to change and improve the journal to make it provide an efficient and permanent record of birdlife in Pennsylvania. Anyone on the Transition Team will be glad to hear your ideas. In future years, dramatic changes are possible. The internet and web have brought bird sightings from around the state to our desks within minutes. The journal needs to define its role anew within that context. *Pennsylvania Birds* will grow, adapt, and continue to serve an important role in documenting bird records within this diverse and wonderful Commonwealth.

– Dan Brauning
Transition Team Chairperson

The Conservation Corner

Adequate funding for wildlife always seems to be lacking, and politicians never seem to give it high priority. In Pennsylvania, Growing Greener has helped fill this gap, but it too didn't meet all the needs and now, it will be ending next year.

There have been several proposals to continue funding for Growing Greener programs through an increase in the solid waste tipping fee. Unfortunately, the solid waste industry has characterized this as a "tax" and convinced Gov. Schweiker and House Speaker Ryan to oppose any increase resulting in all the proposals being postponed. PSO members can help counter the industry's opposition by contacting their state legislators and urging them to support adequate and permanent funding of an improved Growing Greener program.

And just what is adequate and permanent funding and an improved Growing Greener? To answer these questions, consider the current postponed proposals as outlined in a memo from PennFuture.

- Attorney General and candidate for Governor Mike Fisher has proposed raising the tipping fee by \$2 per ton for two years to fund Growing Greener. Total additional funds generated would be about \$100 million.
- Rep. Sarah Steelman has introduced HB 2334 to authorize a \$150 million bond referendum for Growing Greener.
- Candidate for Governor and Mayor Ed Rendell has proposed a 5-year, \$1 billion commitment to environmental funding, with passage of HB 2334 and raising the tipping fee by \$5 per ton for five years as key provisions of his plan.
- Rep. Levdansky has introduced HB 2385 to raise the tipping fee \$4 per ton. Total funds generated would be about \$104 million per year for ten years or \$1.04 billion. Rep. Levdansky's proposal also includes funds for the Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission, and urban redevelopment programs. And, he may propose to raise the fee to \$5 per ton to generate additional funds.
- Rep. Harper has introduced HB 2345 to raise the tipping fee by \$5 per ton and has no "sunset" provision. This would raise about \$1.3 billion over ten years, and the funding would continue.

- Auditor General and candidate for governor Robert Casey proposed a total of \$1.375 billion over ten years raising the tipping by \$3 per ton the first two years and then by \$5 per ton for eight years, a \$250 million Conservation and Restoration Bond and a \$175 million Water and Sewer Bond.

Of all these proposals, only Rep. Harper proposes to continue funding into the future. The other proposals all have a sunset clause which means that we will have to keep coming back to the legislature – not an encouraging thought. Also note that only Rep. Levdansky included the Commissions in his proposal. The other proposals do not include the Commissions, a major flaw. Both the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission need funds for nongame programs and other conservation projects. And finally, all of the proposals fall short of the actual funding needs. One estimate is that an additional \$8 to \$10 million per year is required for wildlife programs – that's above and beyond a minimum \$5 per ton tipping fee – in order to just meet current needs.

What actually happens is anybody's guess; but in addition to contacting your legislators, PSO members can continue to track the gubernatorial candidates' positions and let them know we want adequate and permanent funding. This election will be critical for the future funding of Growing Greener, and we need to encourage/demand that it be adequately and permanently funded. And, of course, we need to vote for the candidate who can best accomplish the needs of conservation.

– Mark Henry
PSO Conservation Chairperson

Do Something Wild!

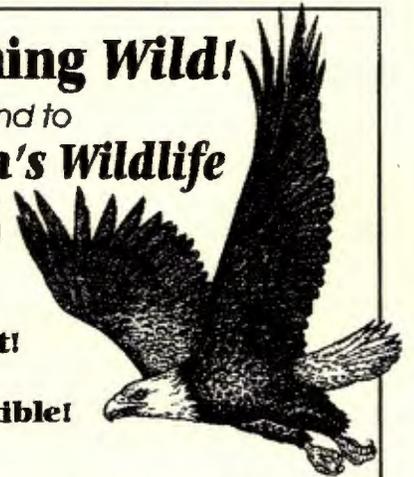
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- ✓ **It's easy!**
- ✓ **It's tax deductible!**



If you don't have a refund, you can send \$10.00 or more to the PA Wild Resource Conservation Fund, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764



Highway Plans Threaten Rothrock State Forest

As most PSO members know, Penn DOT is examining ways to improve Route 322 in central Pennsylvania – both in terms of safety and predicted future traffic loads. This process may involve significant improvements to the current road or the building of a new four-lane highway through the area. It is very early in the design process – no dirt will be turned over for at least six or eight years or maybe even a decade or more.

Two or three dozen alternate routes for Route 322 are currently under consideration. Many of these alternatives involve new roadway that would consume hundreds, if not thousands, of acres of forested, agricultural, or rural residential land – in other words, excellent or at least good wildlife habitat.

Some suggested routes cut through the heart of Rothrock State Forest in the region where Centre, Huntingdon, and Mifflin counties adjoin. Rothrock State Forest is a largely unfragmented ecosystem of approximately 100,000 acres. Although some logging occurs, this forest as a whole has been recovering as well as can be expected for the last century following the destruction by 19th century logging.

Embedded within Rothrock State Forest is the Thickhead Wild Area, designated as an IBA – a mostly high elevation area in which no logging and little “management” occurs. Much of Thickhead is typical eastern deciduous forest (oak, maple, hickory etc.) with an abundance of Red-eyed Vireos, Ovenbirds, and Scarlet Tanagers. Within the roughly 5000+ acres of Thickhead Wild Area are four designated Natural Areas. Three of these natural areas contain flora and fauna characteristic of more northerly regions. Bear Meadows Natural Area is an 325-acre bog in a high, cold valley. Though not formed by glacial action, the bog is ecologically similar to northern glacier-formed bogs. Blue-headed Vireos; Golden-crowned Kinglets; Veeries; Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, and Canada Warblers; Northern Waterthrush; and Swamp Sparrows are common breeding species at Bear Meadows. In addition to hemlock and white pine, one of the most southerly stands of black spruce in the eastern U.S. occurs at Bear Meadows. Detweiler Run and Alan Seeger Natural Areas both include remnant old-growth forest that escaped the loggers. The patches of tall hemlock and white pine with dense rhododendron and hemlock understory feature northern breeding birds uncommon this far south and away from the Allegheny Plateau: Blue-headed Vireo, Winter Wren, and Magnolia, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, and Canada

Warblers. Other breeders include Acadian Flycatcher, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, and Black-throated Green and Worm-eating Warblers. In addition to old-growth conifers, some deciduous specimens including oak and tulip are large enough to suggest they also probably predate the logging era. Big Flat Laurel Natural Area is on the broad, flat ridgetop of Thickhead Mountain at an elevation of 2400 feet. This is a type of heath barrens with huckleberry and laurel thickets interspersed with semi-stunted patches of chestnut oak and conifers. Some chestnut-oaks on Thickhead’s ridges are thought to be essentially old-growth (300+ years) despite their modest stature. Big Flat has a high density of breeding Common Yellowthroats and Eastern Towhees; other breeders include Hermit Thrush and Chestnut-sided, Yellow-rumped, and Black-and-White Warblers.

Local nature enthusiasts cannot envision anyone, even Penn DOT, putting a highway through this area. Yet Thickhead Wild Area lies directly within the portion of Rothrock State Forest through which Penn DOT has drawn possible new paths for a restructured Route 322. It is entirely possible Penn DOT will stay out of Rothrock. Some of the proposed possible routes pass north of and outside Rothrock’s boundaries. Unfortunately, while sparing Rothrock, these routes would nevertheless destroy valuable farmland and privately owned high-quality wildlife habitat.

In April (according to Penn DOT’s stated schedule), Penn DOT and local citizen advisory groups (mostly local governments) will reduce the list of possible relocation routes. Those routes not eliminated will undergo further and more detailed study including environmental impact assessments. Given this schedule, *now* is the time for concerned citizens to express their views to Penn DOT, urging that a highway not be placed through Rothrock State Forest. Furthermore, it is the contention of local nature-oriented people that Penn DOT should select the logical and simple option of retaining and improving the current alignment for Route 322, thus saving both money and land, whether forest or farmland, in the process.

Although this is a central Pennsylvania issue in this instance, this is an opportunity to demonstrate to Penn DOT that ordinary citizens from across the state care about land conservation and demand a say in deciding where highways will be placed. If the point can be made and won here – a precedent will be set for inevitable similar conflicts over land consumption by incessant and mindless road construction elsewhere in the state.

Please consider writing to our Penn DOT district engineers at the addresses below. In addition, please send a copy of your letter to the Bureau of Forestry (address below). They will oppose a highway in Rothrock, and their case will

be strengthened by a pile of letters from the owners of our state forest, the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Mr. George Khoury, PE
District Engineer
Penn DOT District 2
1924-30 Daisy Street
PO Box 342
Clearfield County PA 16830
(814) 765-0410
Fax (814) 765-0424

Mr. Steve Fantechi
Penn DOT District 2
(814) 765-0677
(same address)

At Bureau of Forestry - send a copy to Mr. Dan Devlin:

State Forester
Attention Dan Devlin
Forest Resource Planning & Information
DCNR
Bureau of Forestry
Box 8552
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552

- Greg Grove

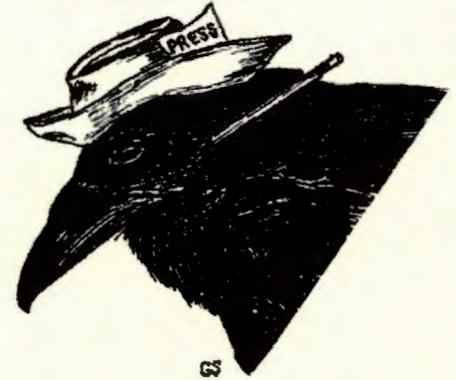


Great Blue Heron Nesting Sites Survey

Every five years the Wildlife Diversity Bird Program of the Pennsylvania Game Commission attempts to survey all nesting Great Blue Heron colonies. The goals of this survey are to confirm that sites active in 1997 are still being used, to count active nests at these sites, and to identify new nesting areas.

If you surveyed a site in 1997, you will be receiving a packet of information asking you to survey this nesting colony again (please send address changes). If you know of a site that has become active since 1997 or wonder if someone is covering a colony, please contact Deb Siefken, 717-677-4830, siefkend@cvn.net.

The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery from the Special Areas Project

Birding volunteers continue to contribute a great deal of data to the Special Areas Project. As of early March, the SAP database includes bird data for 5736 field trips to 121 locations in Pennsylvania. This represents more than 16,000 party hours by Pennsylvania birders. They have tabulated over 1.3 million birds in the process. Many field trips have not yet been entered into the database, so SAP will continue to grow this year. This is an enormous contribution to our knowledge of Pennsylvania birds. Thanks for all of your contributions.

Yellow Creek State Park Bird Checklist: Job Completed

It's done! Thanks to the brave birding volunteers of the Todd Bird Club, the "official" Yellow Creek State Park checklist has been completed. Margaret Higbee acted as the Local Coordinator of the SAP survey of Yellow Creek.

This project has truly been a team effort. The Bureau of State Parks developed a very detailed and informative template for state park bird checklists. Charlie Miller of the DCNR's Harrisburg office designed the checklist with the advice of birders and ornithologists. We wanted a phenogram that could show the uninitiated when each species was likely to be found in each park. This amounts to an "ease of finding" rather than an abundance category. During the process, Dan Brauning, Frank Haas, Margaret Brittingham, Laurie Goodrich, and others contributed ideas that went into the design. Some suggestions taken were made many years ago in the early stages of the Special Areas Project. The Harrisburg office worked with the Yellow Creek State Park staff including Ken Bisbee, park superintendent, and Mike Shaffer, environmental specialist, who in turn worked with the local birders. Todd Bird Club and PSO provided the data and the back-breaking, eye-squinting work of chart data entry.

The result is a very large, detailed, informative list of all species that have been found in the park. The product is huge by checklist standards. The Yellow Creek checklist is printed on 11 by 17 inch stock. These pages are folded into

fourths for a handier (but still big) carrying size. Habitat information is provided in neat symbols beside each species' name. The calendar year is illustrated as a bar, known as a phenogram, extending horizontally across the page. The darkest parts of the bar indicate that you "probably will find" the species at that time, while consecutively lighter shades of gray show that you "might find" or you are "lucky to find" the species. Birds that were observed only occasionally (one or two sightings, only), are added in an "Unusual Birds" list after the phenogram. In addition, the checklist includes a section called "Key Birding Areas and Information." This section gives good ideas to a visitor where to look for birds in different seasons. The directions are meant to supplement information given on the state park map.

The checklist charts are saved and stored electronically in Harrisburg. They can be modified as the status of species change at each park. The checklists are being printed in the Harrisburg office and sent to Yellow Creek State Park so that park personnel do not have to be responsible for making copies of the large, complex document.

Most of the data used to produce this excellent field checklist came from the Special Areas Project. Amazingly, the 487 field trips in the SAP database were not the only source. Margaret Higbee had several hundred more field trips in the Higbee birding database that added even more species to the total bird list. The SAP main office completed monthly review reports for each month that showed the "birds per party hour" and the "frequency of observation" as well as the first and last dates observed for each species in each month. The "birds per party hour" and "frequency of observation" were converted to "ease of finding" codes for each month and each species. I sent these monthly summaries to Margaret Higbee, the Local Coordinator of the SAP survey of Yellow Creek. Margaret checked these monthly summaries for missing odd reports and hidden biases of coverage (less coverage of wooded areas during waterfowl migration, for instance).

The Todd Bird Club and the Bureau of State Parks should be proud of their mutual accomplishment. The Todd Bird Club contributed 1569 party hours in their SAP visits. In the case of this SAP, the "volunteer hour" probably represents at least 4 "man hours" of time since this club regularly visits the park in pretty large groups. So, if you do a little multiplication you can estimate that the field work alone took at least 6276 hours of "labor" (although, in this case, a labor of love). If we were to actually pay the birders as if they were research technicians at a nominal fee of \$8 per hour, the SAP field work would have cost more than \$50,000. That does not even include all the travel and data management time. (Margaret probably wore out several pairs of glasses

filling out the data forms).

This is an incredible effort that shows the power of volunteers. We should be appreciative of all the ground work done by the Todd birders. The results are invaluable. Many people will learn a lot more about birds as a result of this checklist.

Thanks to everyone in Todd who contributed to this project. Your check is in the mail in the form of a really great checklist.

Natural Pennsylvania: The Book

Natural Pennsylvania is not just a jingo or a web site. It is a real place.

Natural Pennsylvania is a book now, too. Charles Fergus has just published a fine book on the Bureau of State Forest (BOF) Natural Areas of our Commonwealth. Our SAP data are a part of this book which is why I bring the news of this book to you.

As many of you remember, Chuck attended our annual meeting at State College last year. It wasn't much of a stretch for him because Chuck grew up in the State College area and lives near Port Matilda. He is well known for his series of essays called "Thornapples" that appeared for several years in the *Pennsylvania Game News*. Many of his essays include his experiences with birds, both game birds and otherwise. One of my very favorite nature essays is Chuck's "The Wingless Crow" that appeared as one of the Thornapple series and is the title essay in a collection published by Lyons and Burford Publishers. I even caught my wife reading from a collection of his Thornapples the other night. His writing has broad appeal for a guy who has published mostly in hunting magazines.

Natural Pennsylvania explores all 61 BOF Natural Areas. Chuck personally visited each one and wrote from his own experiences. The essays are full of references to fungi, wildflowers, salamander, frogs, and butterflies observed along the trails. He often traveled with local naturalists familiar with the locations. It always helps to have a local guide.

Two SAP Coordinators, Greg Grove and Nick Bolgiano accompanied Chuck on his trips to Rothrock State Forest Natural Areas. Greg and Nick have been the major contributors to the Natural Area data we have for SAP. Nick even made a special trip to Tamarack Swamp in Clinton County to tally the summer birds of that remote place. For me, one of the highlights of the book is the picture of Nick imitating a Barred Owl in Bear Meadows. (It is a shame the book doesn't have an audio version. How does that go,

PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY
13th Annual Meeting
17-19 May, 2002
East Stroudsburg University
East Stroudsburg, PA

Name(s) (include each person registering) _____

No. persons X Cost = Total

Mailing Address _____

Friday Social (indicate if attending) _____ No Charge

MEALS

Breakfast **ON YOUR OWN**
 (several convenience stores & fast food nearby)

Lunch **ON YOUR OWN**

Banquet Buffet \$17.95 _____ X \$17.95 \$ _____
 (Vegetable lasagna & baked chicken)

Banquet only \$20.95 _____ X \$20.95 \$ _____
 (no registration, sessions, or field trips)

Sunday Breakfast **ON YOUR OWN**

Subtotal \$ _____

Subtotal from other side \$ _____

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

No. of Persons X Cost = Total \$

PSO Member _____ \$25.00 _____

Member's spouse/guest _____ \$20.00 _____

Non-Member _____ \$30.00 _____

Non-Member's spouse/guest _____ \$20.00 _____

Children under 18 _____ \$12.00 _____

After Deadline, April 30, 2002 _____ \$ 5.00 _____

Lodging : ESU Suites (supply your own bathroom linen & toiletries)

Two nights: Double occupancy \$73.00/person _____

Roommate's name: _____

Single occupancy \$83.00/person _____

One night: Double occupancy \$42.00/person . Night: _____

Roommate's name: _____

Single occupancy \$52.00/person. Night: _____

For other lodging options: Budget Motel (570-424-5451), Hampton Inn (570-424-0400),
 Best Western (570-421-2200), Shannon Inn (570-424-1951), Stroudsmoor Country Inn &
 Resort (570-421-6431), Shawnee Inn (570-424-4000).

Subtotal (from this side) _____

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, Annual Meeting, 17-19 May, 2002,
 East Stroudsburg, PA

Name _____ No. of Persons _____

Amount received _____ Balance _____

Thank you. We look forward to seeing you. Shonah A. Hunter (570) 893-2062

shunter@lhup.edu

Registration Deadline: April 30, 2002

Please make checks or money orders payable to PSO and mail to:

Shonah A. Hunter
 Dept. of Biological Sciences
 Lock Haven University
 Lock Haven, PA 17745

2002 PSO Meeting's Target Species

Listed below are just a few of the species that we will target during our field trips at the annual meeting being held this year in the Poconos from May 17 through 19.

American Black Duck
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Wild Turkey
Whip-poor-will
Acadian Flycatcher
Alder Flycatcher
Blue-headed Vireo
Winter Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Hermit Thrush
Blue-winged Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Northern Parula

Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Pine Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Northern Waterthrush
Louisiana Waterthrush
Eastern Towhee
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Bobolink
Purple Finch



Nick?) Nobody knows the birds of Bear Meadows better than Nick. Greg contributed his personal knowledge of Detweiler's Run birds that comes from dozens of trips there. At the last annual meeting of PSO, many of us followed Greg into the valley to enjoy its beauty and its birds. There aren't many places in the Valley and Ridge Province where so many species of northern warblers are so common. It was a surprise for many people to hear and see Canada and Blackburnian Warblers so far from the border.

The Special Areas Project supplied Chuck with bird data from several locations. In addition to the Rothrock areas, I gave him bird data for places including Pine Creek Gorge, Hemlocks, Frank E. Masland, Algerine Swamp, Reynold's Spring, Rosecrans Bog, Wykoff Run, and Tamarack Swamp that were provided to SAP by you, Pennsylvania's birders. For some locations, we don't have many field trips, but the ones we have give us a good glimpse of each natural area's bird community. Some of our data are sprinkled through the text and gave the author a better rounded view of each place than he could obtain from one visit.

As much data as SAP has on our natural areas, I wish it had much more. As I page through Chuck's book, I wonder what birds live in places like Little Juniata Water Gap. Does this natural area, like the nearby Lower Trail, have populations of Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, or Worm-eating Warbler? Our BOF Natural Areas are concentrated in the North Central highlands where some of the largest extant forests in the state are found. I wonder if some of these natural areas are home to populations of Swainson's Thrush, Red Crossbill, or Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. With names like Lebo Red Pine and Tall Timbers, you just *know* that they are good for birds. Old growth forests like Forrest H. Dutlinger and Snyder-Middleswarth deserve a thorough bird inventory. Large natural areas like the 5,119-acre Hook Natural Area in Union County and the 4,987-acre Miller Run Natural Area in Lycoming County probably support large populations of forest interior birds. Most of these natural areas have not been visited by a competent field ornithologist in decades, if at all.

Some natural areas were named after people who never visited there. Did you know that Alan Seeger was an American poet who died while serving in the French foreign legion? I wonder if he would have appreciated the splendor of the big trees and the Blackburnian and Black-throated Green Warblers that are so common there?

Natural Pennsylvania is published by Stackpole Press and is sold in most Pennsylvania bookstores. I think the library of each Pennsylvania naturalist and every town library should have a copy. By reading this book, anyone may

become more appreciative of the wildest and most natural places in Penn's Woods. Birds are a big part of those places.

For more information about the Special Areas Project:

Douglas A. Gross
PSO Special Areas Project Coordinator
Susquehanna SES Environmental Laboratory
804 Salem Boulevard, Berwick, PA 18603.
or, 144 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859

office phone: 570-542-2191
e-mail: dougross@sunlink.net

The Poconos: One of the Last Great Places to Bird!

The 2002 PSO Annual Meeting will be held May 17-19 at East Stroudsburg University in Monroe County. Registration deadline is April 30. Friday evening will begin with registration and a social. Our business meeting including election of officers and board members will begin at 8:00 p.m. A brief overview of the field trips will follow.

On Saturday morning breakfast will be on our own, then we will meet back at ESU for our field trips. There is much more to birding in the poconos than the occasional Black-backed Woodpecker. Possible destinations include the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area, Tannersville Bog, Pocono Environmental Education Center, the Bushkill area,, and Delaware State Forest. Field trips will conclude by noon so that participants may eat lunch and return to ESU's Moore Biology Hall by 1:00 for our afternoon programs.

We will feature four afternoon speakers. The first, Robert M. Ross, Ecologist with the U. S. Geological Survey's Leetown Science Center at the Northern Appalachian Research Laboratory in Wellsboro, is better known to us as a past PSO president. He will speak on "Mesohabitat Use of Threatened Hemlock Forests by Breeding Birds of the Delaware River Valley." Terry L. Master, an ornithologist from ESU, and Jim Sheehan, one of his graduate students, will discuss the ecology of the Acadian Flycatcher in the Delaware Watershed. Terry Master is well known for his work with Louisiana Waterthrushes. The Nature Conservancy's Bud Cook will inform us of the Conservancy's activities in the Poconos. Working in conjunction with Bud, our own president Doug Gross will supply bird data that was collected as part of the "Wings of the Americas" project specific to the locations in Bud Cook's talk. A fourth talk will be announced at a later date after arrangements are finalized.

The afternoon sessions will end at 5:00 p.m., allowing time for participants to "freshen up" for the evening's banquet which will be held in the cafeteria at ESU. The menu will include a choice of Vegetarian Lasagna or Roast Chicken Stuffed with Herbed Bread Crumbs and Roasted Red Potatoes with a dessert of Sorbet in Praline Basket.

The banquet speaker will be John Serrao, a freelance naturalist and writer/photographer, who received his MS degree in Science and Environmental Education from Cornell University. Serrao is an accomplished photographer who has published in more than 50 magazines as well as 12 Audubon field guides. His latest book covers the reptiles and amphibians of the Poconos and features his stunning photographs. He has conducted hundreds of programs and workshops in northeastern Pennsylvania on the natural history and ecology of the Poconos. You may have heard him speak eloquently about the region on National Public Radio. Many of his programs emphasize birds and bird habitats. His banquet program will give a splendid overview of the unique ecosystems of the Poconos bioregion.

On Sunday morning, field trips will again depart at 6:30 a.m. for a variety of destinations, including many of the ones mentioned above and possibly a few farther away such as Promised Land State Park, Long Pond Barrens and Wetlands, Minsi Lake, Cherry Valley. The Nature Conservancy has a new office at Long Pond for all to visit. The rhodora will be in bloom! This will be an exceptional and colorful meeting. Don't miss it!

Spring 2002 Birders' ID Workshops

Last year Dan Brauning, Doug Gross, Jerry McWilliams and Steven Hoffman offered a series of all-day bird ID workshops for intermediate/advanced birders. These workshops were designed to improve the participants' birding skills (both visual and auditory), as well as introduce concepts and methods for conducting baseline bird inventories and long term monitoring of breeding populations. These workshops were held at Nolde Forest (Reading), Beechwood Farms (Pittsburgh), and Shaver's Creek (State College). All three workshops were completely filled (45-50 birders attended each one) and were enthusiastically received by all. These training sessions facilitated the recruitment of volunteers who later conducted field surveys on a number of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across PA in June.

Audubon plans to expand its volunteer bird monitoring efforts on IBAs during the 2002 breeding season and has decided to once again team up with the PA Game

Commission and Doug Gross to offer the same basic workshop in spring 2002 at two new locations -- Philadelphia and Harrisburg. (Since a portion of this workshop will be given at the upcoming Birding Festival in Pittsburgh in early May and later at Powdermill in June, we have decided to defer any additional offerings of this all-day workshop in western PA until next year.)

Specific topics to be covered by this workshop include: birding by ear, challenging bird ID topics (including raptors, fall warblers, flycatchers, etc.), an overview of strategies for counting and estimating bird numbers, how to conduct point counts (including practice sessions in the field), an overview of the Special Area Project and Important Bird Areas project, and much more. This training is geared to birders who already have some birding experience and have a strong desire to improve their field skills and perhaps contribute to PA bird conservation through "citizen science." These sessions are a lot of fun and will give you an opportunity to meet other birders and learn from some of the top bird experts in the state!

Both workshops will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m. and conclude by 4:00 p.m. Dates and locations are:

- April 6, 2002 – Ben Olewine Nature Center at Wildwood Lake, Harrisburg
- April 13, 2002 – John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge/Tinicum Marsh, Philadelphia

Registration: Pre-registration is required. A nominal fee of \$20 will be charged per person, which will cover the cost of drinks, snacks, lunch, and handouts. Send your registration checks to:

Beth Sanders
Audubon PA
100 Wildwood Way
Harrisburg, PA 17110

To obtain a brochure with a more detailed program schedule and registration form, please check with your local bird club or Audubon Society. Brochures can also be sent as an e-mail attachment or obtained via snail mail from Beth Sanders (bsanders@audubon.org / 717-213-6880).

Please do not wait until the last minute to sign up. These workshops filled very quickly last year.

New Web Site

The North Branch Bird Club of Columbia, Montour, and Luzerne counties now has a web site, which is currently under construction, at www.areawebsites.org/nbbc.

Notes from PORC

(Editor's note: This article is a regular feature of the Newsletter in which the state records committee reports on its policies, procedures, and progress.)

This issue of the Newsletter is an opportune time for the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records committee to publicize a new asset that the Committee has wanted for a long time: a presence on the web. We have it now as part of the new PSO web site.

The reason why this is opportune relates to a marathon analysis of 141 records that the committee has just concluded. The results will soon be published in *Pennsylvania Birds* in the committee's 11th annual report, and you will see that half of the records were not accepted.

It was no fun to write personal letters in behalf of the committee last month explaining to observers why their documentations did not convince enough members for acceptance. Believe me, voting not to accept a record of a rarity can be as disappointing to the committee as it is to the observer. In many cases, we believe an identification is most likely correct but that the documentation – the only thing on which we can make an objective judgment – was not sufficient to support it conclusively. The result? Perhaps the loss of a first state record.

That missed opportunity leads to the connection with PORC's new web pages. The site contains two features that we believe will improve the odds of a record's acceptance, and thus improve the state's ornithological records.

One feature is a Pennsylvania Rare Bird Report Form that we offer as an example of what good documentation should contain. It is two pages long, asks for an intimidating variety of details, and is not necessary to use fully. For one thing, not all the details may be relevant to a particular sighting, or may even be impossible to obtain. Consider it merely as a guide, if you wish, but please consult it. The greater the rarity, the more complete the details must be.

The second feature is a collection of tips for proper documentation, indicating what the committee looks for when evaluating a record. The essay explains the critical needs for careful note-taking, complete and accurate descriptions, separation of the bird from similar species, and many suggestions for improving your reports. Please consult this, too.

Speaking again of those no-fun letters, I will say very gratefully that I received notes from two of Pennsylvania's expert birders who said they understood the committee's viewpoint in failing to accept their records. I can only imagine how many other observers may be fuming quietly out there, and I urge them to continue submitting their records of rarities.

PORC hopes that the guidelines on the web site will help decrease the fuming and increase the value of every observer's records.

And while you're on the site, don't neglect the gallery of several dozen rare bird photographs added to the site by Frank Haas. All are interesting, and some are classics – a colorful tribute to Pennsylvania's fine photographers.

– Paul Hess, PORC Chair

PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know our Pennsylvania birds?

1. Which wood warbler species, a fairly common migrant, is known for sometimes having the largest clutch size among warblers?
2. What uncommon breeder in Pennsylvania regularly feeds its feathers to its young?
3. A bird found dead on the cooling tower of a Pennsylvania nuclear power plant is the only record of the species in the United States. What species?
4. Seven species in the family Picidae breed in this state. During recent decades which two have shown the greatest population increase and the greatest decrease here?
5. What bird's Latin name, which links it to high mountains, is completely inappropriate for its well-known breeding habitat in Pennsylvania?

Deadline Extended

At our March 2001 board meeting, we decided to grant a scholarship to a student 18 years of age or younger so that this young person could attend our annual meeting. PSO will pay for the student's food and lodging, but the person nominating the youth will be responsible for transporting him or her to the meeting and be responsible for him or her during the meeting. You may nominate the student of your choice by sending the following form to Alan Gregory (meg5@psu.edu or alangregory@standard-speaker.com), P.O. Box 571, Conyngham, PA 18219-0571, before April 15, 2002.

Name of Student Being Nominated _____

Address _____

Age _____ Birth Date _____ Student's Phone No. _____

Youth's Involvement with Birding (Please describe providing as many details as possible.)

Name of Person Nominating Youth _____ Phone No. _____

Relationship (if any) to Youth _____

In nominating this youth, I understand that I will be responsible for the youth and his transportation to and from the meeting.

(Signature)

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, March 19 – Timothy Leach will present *Wild Beauty of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Impacts of Drilling for Oil* at 7:00 p.m. at the Olewine Nature Center at Wildwood Lake Sanctuary, 100 Wildwood Way, Harrisburg. For information call 717-213-6880.

Saturday, April 6 – Moraine State Park in Butler Co., led by Fred and Carol McCullough (412-921-6873). Meet at the first parking lot on the south shore day use area accessed from Route 422 at 8:30 a.m.. Three Rivers Bird Club.

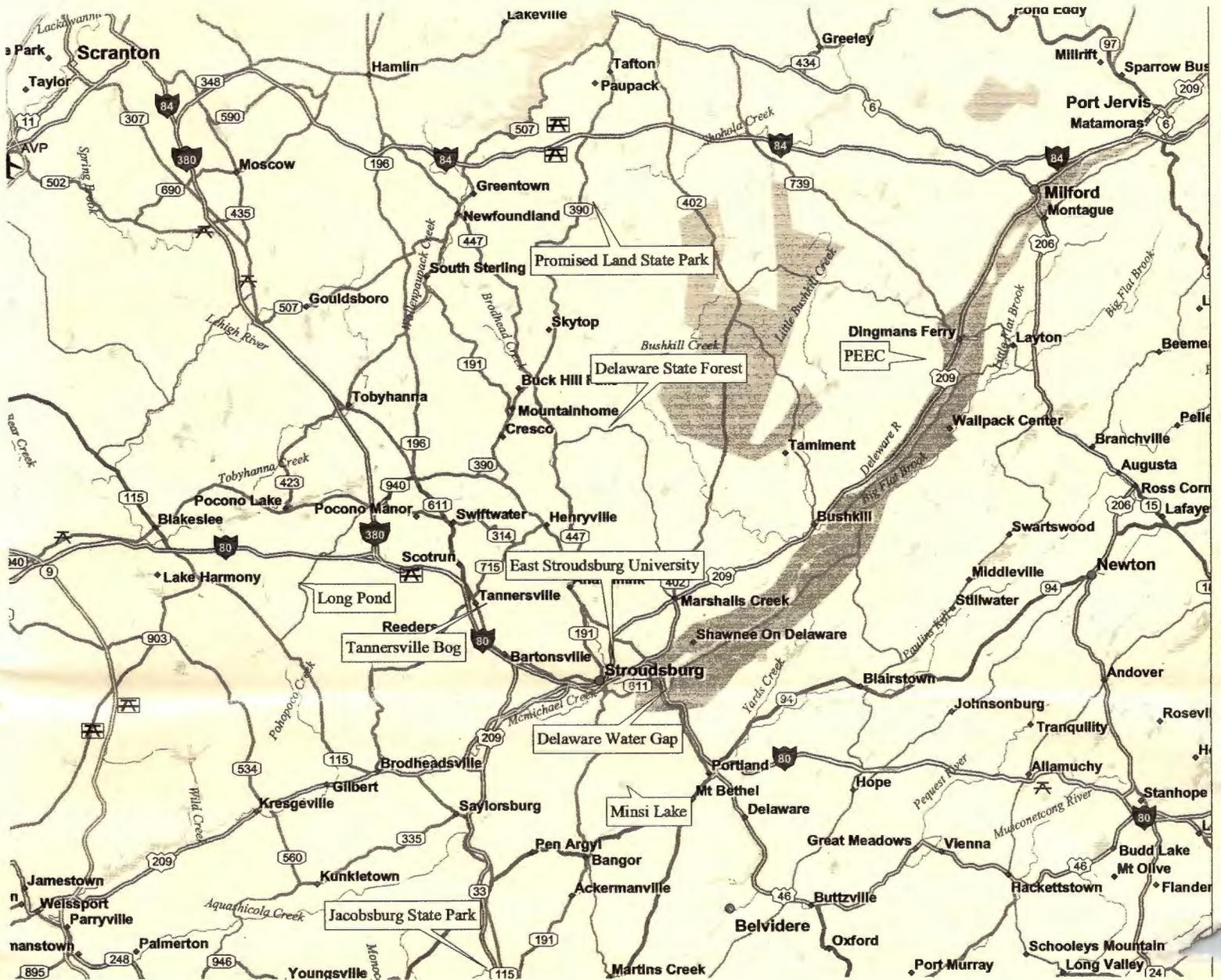
Saturday, April 6 – Dunnings Creek & Shawnee State Park in Bedford Co., led by Jim Pemberton (412-751-1929). Westmoreland Bird Club.

Sunday, April 14 – Presque Isle, led by Mike Fialkovich (412-731-3581). Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the first parking lot on the right inside the park. Three Rivers Bird Club.

May 3, 4, 5 – Fourth Spring Birding and Nature Festival of Western PA, sponsored by Bartramian Audubon, Seneca Rocks Audubon, and McKeever Environmental Learning Center. For information, contact McKeever (724-376-1000).

(continued on page 11)

2002 PSO Meeting Locations



Coming Events (continued from page 10)

- May 3, 4, 5 – The first Pittsburgh Birding Festival sponsored by Frick Environmental Center and The Three Rivers Birding Club. Outings and workshops require registration. Registration deadline is April 15. For details, e-mail pabirdsrus@adelphia.net.
- May 4 – Yellow Creek State Park in Indiana Co., led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet at the park office on Rt. 259 just off 422 at 8:00 a.m. Todd Bird Club.
- Saturday, May 4 – Annual wildflower/birdwalk at Enlow Fork (SGL 302), Greene Co., Wind Ridge, PA.. For information, contact Marjorie Howard (birdwatcher@alltel.net)
- Tuesday, May 7 – 6:00 p.m. Todd Bird Club Banquet Meeting. "Goshawk – A Bird Driven by Its Prey," presented by David Brinker. For information, contact Carol Guba (724-465-4429) or Roger Higbee (724-354-3493).
- Saturday, May 11 – North American Migration Count. Statewide.
- Wednesday, June 5 – Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Banquet, featuring Scott Weidensaul's "The Ghost with Trembling Wings," at Luzerne. E-mail Sandra Goodwin (chickadd@epix.net) or phone 570-639-5785, after 4:00 p.m. for reservations.

Answers to quiz on page 8:

1. Cape May Warbler, with a clutch of up to nine eggs. It is a specialist in feeding on spruce budworms, and apparently the species' clutch size tends to increase during budworm outbreaks.
2. Pied-billed Grebe. Other grebes use the same behavior, and the feathers may protect the stomach from damage by fish bones.
3. Spotted Rail. The carcass was found in 1976 in Beaver County.
4. Red-bellied Woodpecker, the greatest increase; Red-headed Woodpecker, the greatest decrease.
5. Horned Lark. Its Latin name *alpestris* means "of the Alps" or more broadly "of high mountains" — appropriate for its breeding habitat in Eurasia, but certainly not in our state.

PSO Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology.

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Special Thanks

Sincere thanks to Frank Haas who is serving as webmaster for the PSO website. News of our organization and information concerning birding in Pennsylvania are readily available at this site. ~~It is still growing.~~ If you haven't already done so, please check out the site and see what a fantastic job Frank has done. ~~And next time you see him,~~ be sure to thank him personally! The web site address is www.pabirds.org;

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